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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KRAMER'S FAREWELL TOUR: ST. VINCENT AND
THE GRENADINES

REF: STATE 168324

Classified By: Ambassador Mary Kramer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On October 16, Ambassador Kramer paid farewell courtsey calls on the Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, and Governor General of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In her meeting with the Foreign Minister, he candidly admitted that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (GOSVG) will support Venezuela throughout the voting for a seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) because Venezuela is playing a major role in constructing St. Vincent's future international airport. Rather than meeting with Ambassador Kramer in private as expected, the Prime Minister called a press conference to discuss U.S.-GOSVG collaboration in seizing a sailing vessel from a convicted narcotics smuggler. Finally, the Ambassador's meeting with the Governor General was pleasantly simple. These meetings were followed by various press events. END SUMMARY.

FM STRAKER: WE NEED AN AIRPORT

12. (SBU) In Ambassador Kramer's October 16 meeting with Foreign Minister Sir Louis Straker, the two discussed a number of issues including the GRULAC vote for the UNSC, Article 98, and the recent waiver of APSA IMET provisions. The Ambassador was accompanied by PAO Julie O'Reagan and PolOff, who served as notetaker. Permanent Secretary Patricia Martin accompanied the Foreign Minister.

13. (C) On the GRULAC vote for the UNSC, Straker admitted that the GOSVG is committed to Venezuela because of the assistance Venezuela has given St. Vincent and the Grenadines in recent years. Specifically, Straker cited Venezuela's promise to assist in constructing St. Vincent's future international airport. When explaining the potential negative consequences of Venezuelan participation in the Security Council, Straker simply explained that, "we need that airport badly." He also stated that if the United States would assist with the airport, then that would change the GOSVG's vote. Taiwan, Mexico, Canada, and Cuba are also contributing to the airport. Construction should begin next year. In addition to citing the airport, Straker mentioned Petrocaribe and 25

Venezuelan state scholarships for Vincentian students as reasons why the GOSVG is committed to voting for Venezuela.

¶4. (C) Straker and Ambassador Kramer also discussed U.S.-Caribbean relations, including unfriendly rhetoric from the GOSVG towards the United States. The Ambassador cited Secretary Rice's meetings with Caribbean leaders as an

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example of U.S. efforts to improve relations, to which Straker replied that he wants to see actions, not meetings. As an example, he said it was nice to see the President's recent waiving of APSA IMET provisions for St. Vincent and the Grenadines (reftel). In discussing this waiver, Straker showed a misunderstanding of Article 98, stating that the GOSVG cannot sign anything contrary to the treaty of Rome because it has been committed to the treaty since its inception and it cannot pull out of this commitment. The Ambassador explained that Article 98 is not against the Treaty of Rome nor does it request a signatory to renege on the treaty. (Note: Straker's comments to the Ambassador and statements in the press by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves show that the GOSVG believes the recent waiver of APSA IMET provisions comes unconditionally and that IMET funding will once again flow at previous levels. End Note.)

¶5. (C) Straker also expressed a number of enduring concerns, including the maintenance of the Regional Security System's C-26s, the need for a strong visa relationship, and the perceived problem of Vincentians deported from the United States increasing crime in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as new concerns with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Furthermore, Straker and the Ambassador discussed free trade for the region, to which Straker stated that the GOSVG is currently exploring the possibility and making sure the benefits outweigh the costs. St. Vincent's

biggest fear is having its economy killed by U.S. exports.

¶6. (C) BIONOTE: Straker lived in the New York for 31 years and previously held U.S. citizenship, which he had to renounce to run for public office in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He spoke fondly of New York and explained that no one in his government is more pro-U.S. than he is. He still visits often as his family lives in New York. However, his misunderstandings of the sources and uses of U.S. foreign assistance is considerable given he is a former U.S. citizen and taxpayer.

DERAILED BY PM GONSALVES

¶7. (SBU) Ambassador Kramer expected a private, bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, but instead the PM called a press conference to discuss U.S.-GOSVG cooperation in the seizing and auctioning of the sailing vessel "Preference," a ship forfeited by the owner as part of a federal investigation into narcotics smuggling.

¶8. (SBU) In 2001, Robert Young and his wife Sara Wuchevich were arrested for numerous federal firearm and parole violations. They both plead guilty in 2002 and, as part of the plea agreement, forfeited all their assets derived from illegal activities. One of the forfeited vessels, the "Preference," was seized and auctioned with the assistance of the GOSVG Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). The USG provided an asset sharing funds check for \$77,045, approximately half of the auctioned value, from the Confiscated Asset Fund that Ambassador Kramer was to present to PM Gonsalves during their meeting. (Note: DHS/ICE requested no media release in e-mail as the investigation is still ongoing. End note.)

¶9. (SBU) Rather than meeting with the Ambassador in private, PM Gonsalves called a press conference that solely focused on the asset sharing check. The PM went into detail on Young's background, the investigation, and the collaboration between

the two countries in apprehending the "Preference." He then went on to discuss the GOSVG's efforts to crack down on money laundering, citing the Crime Prevention Act of 2001 and the creation of the FIU in 2002. He praised the FIU and the work it has been doing since its creation in 2002 and also detailed why money laundering is bad for the economy and must be stopped. Throughout the press conference, the PM also emphasized the positive U.S.-St. Vincent relationship, emphasizing that the assets sharing is just one example of how the two countries work well together.

¶10. (SBU) After the press conference, the PM excused himself, leaving Ambassador Kramer without an opportunity to speak with him one on one.

COURTESIES WITH THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

¶11. (SBU) The Ambassador had a protocolary meeting with Sir Frederick Ballantyne, Governor General of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They discussed marijuana production in St. Vincent, education, and health care.

PRESS EVENTS

¶12. (U) After official meetings, the Ambassador held a press conference at St. Vincent National Trust where she reflected on her tour of duty as Ambassador to the Eastern Caribbean, assistance the United States provided to the region during her tenure, and her appreciation for the Caribbean. The Ambassador also signed a grant from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation for repair to the Carnegie Library building housing the National Trust. She then donated a collection of children's books to the National Library. All three events were covered by the media.

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